

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF BLUEY

MG PB CHASSIS NO. PB 0698
CHRIS GUY

Early Days, 1930s

Chassis No. PB 0698 was issued in Abingdon on 13th January 1936 and was fitted with a standard Carbodies two-seat sports body. A few months later it became a Kent (UK) constabulary car, based at Maidstone. The constabulary clearly liked MGs, as CKT 827 joined five other PBs and a couple of PAs on the force. Like most of the Kent police PBs, it was black with red upholstery and had aluminium-coloured wheels (Kent police also had one red PB!). More than five percent of PBs started their days as police vehicles.

However, soon after arrival in Maidstone, it was returned to Abingdon with a list of faults including paint damage, rust and loose door hinges. At around the same time it was brought up to police specification by fitting staggered seats, an accurate speedometer, a special petrol tank, an Archimedes-type principal petrol gauge and a few other gizmos.

What happened to PB 0698 between finishing its police service and 1966 is lost in time, but later we will speculate!

Now, while Bluey has chassis No. PB 0698, many other components, including its



Bluey in 2026

engine, gearbox, bonnet and guarantee plate are from another car, chassis No. PB 0679. When new, PB 0679 was very similar to 0698 as it had a standard two-seat sports body and was black with red upholstery. Its first owner was Ernest Marchant of Nottingham, UK, who acquired it in May 1936 from the Nottingham MG Dealer, CH Truman. The vehicle was given the Nottingham registration CAU 863.

In February 1937, Ernest Marchant returned the car

to Abingdon for an engine 'decoke' and valve grind, for which, no doubt, he had to pay: the dealer guarantee was for only six months!

By early 1938, CAU 863 ownership had changed to Mr V Burgass, also of Nottingham. Mr Burgass clearly had early problems with the car as it was returned to Abingdon in February that year with a number of issues. Receipts show that a rebore at that time cost £1.10.0 (about \$3 at the then current exchange rate), a set of new pistons cost



Original guarantee plate from PB 0679, later stamped with 0698

£4.0.0 (\$8) and labour for an engine rebuild cost £5.5.0 (\$10-\$50). To put these figures into context, the average gross weekly earnings in UK in 1938 for a full-time male manual worker was £3.10.0 (\$7); for a female it was under half that.

Again, we don't know what happened to PB 0679 between 1938 and 1966, but again we can try speculating.

Speculation, 1938 to 1966

During WWII, private motoring in the UK was limited due to petrol rationing, blackouts and spare parts shortages. Consequently, many privately-owned cars were put into storage. While these factors may have affected PB 0679, police vehicles would, no doubt, have been exempt. We don't, however, know how long the Kent police kept PB 0698. Then, after the cessation of hostilities, cars were in short supply in the UK. Despite petrol rationing not

finishing until 1950, it is likely that both vehicles would have been pressed into service after 1945.

The only information we have on either car during this period is a monochrome photo of PB 0679 (registration No. CAU 863), but we don't know when this was taken. Nevertheless, we can make an educated guess, as the picture holds some clues as to its date. In particular, the semaphore

indicators have been removed and have been replaced by flashing units mounted in the rear number plate panel. Given that flashing indicators were only approved for use in the UK in 1956, it seems likely that the photo was taken in the late '50s or early '60s. In addition, the colour has been changed from the original black to a much lighter shade, suggesting the car was some years old when the picture was taken and had been repainted at least once.

In the photo, the vehicle appears to be in very poor condition. MOT tests (the equivalent of Australian RWCs), were made compulsory in the UK in 1961, which led to the scrapping of many unroadworthy vehicles, as it was not economically viable to repair them. The author recalls seeing two Triple-M cars sitting in a local (UK) scrapyards in the early '60s. From the picture, it looks as though PB 0679 may have been such a case.



CAU 863 (PB 0679) circa 1960
Photo courtesy of the Triple-M Register

1966 and all that – Bluey

Given the above, it is likely that Bluey was built somewhere in the UK around 1960. Many of the salvageable parts from PB 0679 would have been combined with the good chassis and other parts from PB 0698 to form it. In addition, there is no record of chassis PB 0679 ever being brought to Australia, so the build took place before importation. This fits well with the car being acquired in the UK by a young South Australian in 1966. He paid £40 (\$80) and it was described as running but in poor condition. In the late '60s, he returned to Australia and brought Bluey back with him.

During the '70s, the car was dismantled with the intention of restoring it. This took some time, but a good-quality result was achieved,

which is still in evidence today. In the '80s Bluey became part of a well-established car collection and was exhibited at the Australian National Motor Museum at Birdwood, South Australia. When the collection was split up in the early '90s, Bluey remained with the same family. However, it was little used and in early 2006 was sold to its next keeper in NSW. There, it had the registration No. GO 122.

In 2008 it passed to a new owner in Western Australia (registration 1 CYE 833) and in 2022 it was acquired by its present owner in Victoria.

Thanks to the MG Triple-M Register, Doug Wallace, Ineke Sherman at Kimber House, Wes Symes, John Hunting, Andrew Fock, Mike Long and Garry Rainsford for providing information for this article.



MGB - MGB GT - MGF - MG TF
MG MIDGET - MG ZR
MG ZS - MG ZT - MONTEGO - MAESTRO

ALL THE PARTS YOU NEED

FROM THE SMALLEST NUT & BOLT TO AN ENTIRE BODYSHELL & EVERYTHING IN-BETWEEN

QUALITY PARTS & ACCESSORIES
FAST & RELIABLE WORLDWIDE DELIVERY
EXTENSIVE WEBSITE
VAST STOCKS AT 100,000 SQ FT HQ
KNOWLEDGEABLE STAFF
FREE COMPREHENSIVE CATALOGUES
PRICE MATCH
TRADE & WHOLESALE ENQUIRIES WELCOME



ASK US FOR A FREE CATALOGUE





WEB - www.rimmerbros.com
EMAIL - sales@rimmerbros.com
TEL - +44(0)1522 568000
Rimmer Bros., Triumph House, Sleaford Road, Bracebridge Heath, Lincoln. LN4 2NA.



SEE OUR SOCIAL MEDIA